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From H. Bhattacharyya, A. Kluge, & L. Koenig (eds.), *The Politics of Citizenship, Identity and the State in South Asia* (New Delhi: Samskriti, 2012), pp. 256-273.

The State and Subaltern Assertion in the Diaspora: Towards a Pan-South Asian Identity?

Crispin Bates

In *Subaltern Citizens and their Histories*, the Indian historian Gyan Pandey has encouraged scholars to re-consider the subaltern in terms of their developing relationship with the formal politics of the state. This has been anathema to many scholars, who prefer to use subalternity purely as a relational cultural concept. In doing so, he has sought to highlight, in a thought-provoking manner, the ways in which subaltern groups have endeavoured to cast their identities in defiance of the categories and discourse of caste and religious community that have dominated Indian Studies, and of race which has dominated the discourse of ethnic difference and social exclusion in the USA. Historically, however, the essentialising categories of race, caste, and religious community have dominated the design of constitutions and the decision-making processes of many governments for most of the twentieth century, with powerful influences that are still felt in the present day. The reification of such identities has provided them with an ontological status that can readily be manipulated, thereby multiplying their significance and import in reality. They have thus been the preferred tool of politicians and administrators: cynically in the pursuit of power as well as by those inspired by benign but ill-informed and fundamentally un-democratic attempts at social and political management.

In India, the now widely-used term ‘communalism’ was invented by colonial rulers in the nineteenth century, to refer to the use and manipulation of religious differences for ‘political’ ends antithetical to the national interest. It is related to, but very different from, the idea of ‘community’. Arguably, the rise of ‘communalism’ was partly a reaction to the undermining of older, more local communities by rapid economic and social change. During the period of colonial occupation alternative outlets for popular unease and discontent included the Indian nationalist movement, but the division of this movement into Muslim, Hindu, Brahmin, non-

Brahmin and other fractions, encouraged by the colonial power for strategic reasons, became a hall-mark of Indian politics and social life in the late colonial period.

The secularist consensus established in the early years after Independence for a while promised a new future for India. However, during recent decades, the decline of secularism, the ending of Congress Party hegemony, and the emergence of fundamentalist parties and organisations has made communalism once more a prominent feature of Indian life (Ludden 1990; Basu and Subramanyam 1996). Communalism has also spread beyond the subcontinent, the political conflicts within India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka increasingly being found mirrored amongst the substantial communities of Indians and Pakistanis living abroad.

For historians the question of how the twentieth century's conception of community and contemporary ideas of communalism came about is one of considerable controversy. However, among contemporary sociologists studying community or 'race relations' (as they used to be termed) in the United States, the Caribbean, Africa, the U.K. or Indian Ocean States it is often assumed that the identities of migrant communities are largely brought with them, and that they are based upon primordial forms of identity and conflict to be found in the Indian subcontinent. The international activities of militant political and religious organisations such as the *Vishwa Hindu Parishad* (VHP) or *Jamaat-e-Islami* are likewise predicated upon this assumption, that the interests and identities of Hindus and Muslims are essentially the same.¹ When looked at more closely however, and in comparative perspective, it soon becomes apparent that to 'be a Hindu' in Leicester, in England, for example, is very different from 'being a Hindu' in Durban, South Africa, and that even within the subcontinent, the identities of, for example, Muslims in Bombay, and those in Hyderabad, Lucknow or Bangladesh are very different from one another.

The above essentialist and fundamentalist assumptions are, however, being questioned in recent scholarship which seeks to explain the divergent historical circumstances that have led to the various outcomes in terms of community relations amongst migrant groups in Asia. They have also sought to examine the origins and consequences of the widely varying identities that have emerged among migrant communities within South Asia, and amongst the many communities of South Asians scattered beyond the subcontinent in the former territories of Britain's colonial empire. In the process, they have been forced to admit the role played by subaltern agency 'from below' in re-shaping identities, notwithstanding the legacies of the

past and the highly influential structures of governance set in place by colonial and post-colonial governments and states.

Community and Empire

Most contemporary scholars are keen to emphasize that ethnic identities are far from being primordial (e.g. Brass 1991; Engineer 1985). According to Paul Brass, competing elites draw upon, employ and even fabricate myths, symbols and other elements from indigenous societies in order to fashion a rhetoric that will mobilise populations in pursuit of collective and individual advantages. The modern centralized state plays a crucial role in this process, creating an arena in which ethnic nationalism can flourish. Etienne Balibar, for instance has even argued that nationalism and racism, as well as communalism, are indissolubly linked, being part of the process by which modern capitalist economies manage and control their populations, in particular, the size and remuneration of the workforce (Balibar 1991). In the colonial context, the inadequacy of democratic structures renders elite leadership all the more important, and efforts by the colonial power to avert the emergence of a united front amongst indigenous elites (the strategy of ‘divide and rule’), gave further encouragement to the emergence of a multiplicity of ethnic nationalisms (Tinker 1976). In Africa, the institutions of indirect rule were built upon an assumption by the colonial power that African society was already divided into ethnic fractions, a theory which then frequently assumed the power of self-fulfilment. By empowering specified loyal elites, colonial regimes created a practical locus for political activity, even in communities where no such point of focus of power and loyalty had previously existed (Vail 1988; Lema 1993).

India was the inspiration for many of the methods of colonial governance deployed in Africa, and similar effects may be observed on both continents. In India, caste, tribe and aristocracy were the main bulwarks of customary rule, with *zamindars* (the revenue intermediaries of large estates in Mughal times) and other feudal elites being invested with unusual territorial powers by the British government. A separation of public and private law was enforced, and caste and tribe were used as instruments of imperial management and control through enactments such as the criminal tribes legislation of the 1870s (Robb 1996; Nigam 1990; Cohn 1983). However, social divisions existed not only through their wilful promotion by the

colonial regime. Class played an important role too in generating rivalry and conflict. Thus not only nationalism, but rapid economic change in the late nineteenth century played a part in the emergence of rival caste associations, and revivalist and reform movements amongst both Hindus and Muslims in India (Pandey 1990). In 1909, 1918 and 1935 the British began to exploit these movements, and the conflicts that sometimes resulted, by institutionalising so-called communal differences in successive extensions of the franchise. Separate electorates were created for Hindus, Muslims, Untouchables and *Adivasis*, thus making it very difficult for nationalist politicians to unify these sections of society in the struggle against colonialismⁱⁱ.

At independence, countries as diverse as India, Sri Lanka, Mauritius, Cyprus and Fiji, were left with Constitutions that enshrined this idea of separate electorate, and these Constitutions remained in force for a considerable time with little modification. In some cases, such as Mauritius, they have survived almost unchanged to this day. As with the policies of indirect rule in Africa, Constitutions enshrining the idea of a 'plural society' frequently created the very social atomism and rivalry that they sought to contain. And when competition and rivalry erupt into violence this creates a further sense of distance and the process of division is complete (Tambiah 1996). The outcome of colonial policies of divide and rule, however, were never as predictable as the above narrative suggests, and by explaining the fate of migrant Indian communities overseas it is hoped that it may become more easily possible to perceive the effect of subaltern attempts to re-form received identities and to conceive of alternative possibilities of existence.

Community and Migration

Migration is sometimes put forward as being amongst the fundamental causes of communalism, leading to the 'mixing' of naturally exclusive communities (e.g. Weiner, 1988). It might alternatively be argued that if migration is indeed a determining factor this might simply be because dislocation promotes insecurity. Although they are often more prosperous than those they leave behind, communities of Indians abroad are beleaguered in a variety of ways – numerically in a minority and culturally marginalised in the societies in which they live, as well as forced more often on a daily basis to face the extremes of 'white' racism. Within the Indian Ocean region however, communities of migrant Indians are to be found numerically and culturally in a majority, or at least in significant numbers, as in Mauritius and

Sri Lanka. Both societies are prosperous. Why then communal conflict should erupt in one and not in the other remains a paradox. Even closer to the Hindu heartland of north India, in cities like Kolkata and Bhopal, migrant communities are sometimes able to integrate seamlessly into the societies in which they are placed. At other times they suffer apparently irreconcilable differences with neighbours from whom they are religiously, culturally or ethnically distanced. Whilst the study of inter-ethnic civic institutions has offered one way towards partially resolving this conundrum (Varshney 2002), the study of migrancy itself as a factor has yet received little attention.

Migrant Cultures and 'Postcolonial' Identities

A consistent conclusion, noticed in much recent research concerns the apparent adaptability of migrant communities, and the ease with which their identities have often integrated or otherwise transformed to meet the pressures of different circumstances—a possibly optimistic outcome in an era where identities, particularly religious identities, are increasingly regarded as intransigent and irreconcilable with one another. The research of John Kelly in Fiji (Kelly 1991, 1992, 2001) brings this theme very much to the fore, charting the history of Fijian migrant identity from 'coolie' to 'Indian', and the resistance of the Indian population to the communal space carved out for them by the British.

Fiji's migrant Indians accounted for forty-six per cent of the population by 1946. Most had arrived under indenture contracts to meet the needs of the island's burgeoning sugar industry. The Fijian indentured labourers were described as 'coolies' by the British, but referred to themselves as *girmitiyas*ⁱⁱⁱ. From the very beginning ethnic Fijian and Indian populations were spatially separated, a practice commonly followed in British colonies, ostensibly to manage, but in practice more often affirming colonial preconceptions of racial difference. After 1936 Fijian and Indian 'communities' were also differentially represented in political terms. The administration included members from the 'Indian' community within a limited programme of self-government in an effort to encourage continuing Indian immigration following the abolition of indenture in 1910. (This had been against the wishes of the short-lived Fiji Indian National Congress, which wanted a 'common roll', regardless of race^{iv}).

The situation contrasted markedly with that in India, where defiance of the colonial government and conflict with its communal allies was the hall-mark of Indian nationalism in the 1940s. Kelly explains this by arguing that the indentured migrants did not generally think of themselves as 'Indians' before they arrived in Fiji. Oral evidence suggests that caste and even religious identification was extremely uneven from one sugar estate to the next, and that Indian identities were numerous and overlapping, unlike the stereotyped roles cast for them by British and Fijian politicians. Ultimately, the separation of communities was reinforced in debates in the National Assembly, and the ethnic Fijian chiefs overhauled the 'Native Regulations' in 1944, in order to tie the indigenous or ethnic Fijians more tightly than ever to their natal villages. However, these separations, ethnic, spatial and constitutional, were maintained against the persistent wishes of Indian representatives.

Constitutional Innovation and the Sublimation of Conflict: The Case of Mauritius

The example of Mauritius presents a very different picture from that of Fiji: an island apparently without conflict, and where the effects of colonial policies of divide and rule, have been undermined by a series of carefully constructed political and social compromises. While the island is clearly divided on ethnic and religious grounds, 'Hindu' Mauritians follow a number of original customs and practices, quite different from those seen in the Indian subcontinent, with whom other links and commonalities are considered so important^v. Some 'castes' in Mauritius in particular are quite unrecognisable from a sub-continental perspective, and may incorporate mutually antagonistic castes from an Indian setting into a single group. Thus, a 'Rajput' in Mauritius is of a *sudra* caste, the title having been usurped by this group in the nineteenth century. The terms Hindu and 'Indien' refer exclusively to north Indian Hindus. Migrants from Tamilnad identify their religious group as Tamil, not Hindu, and minority groups such as 'Telegus' and 'Marathis' are preoccupied with maintaining regional endogamy rather than with caste distinctions. The former *Brahmin* elite are referred to as the Maraz and together with the former Rajputs and other *kshatriyas*, now called 'Babujis', enjoy the prestige conferred by high caste status, whilst politically they complain of marginalisation. The *vaisha* are the largest and most influential caste group on the island. Internally the group is divided into Koeri, Kurmi, Kahar, Ahir, Lohar and other *jati*-s. In the past many admitted to Chamar status (as shown by historical records), but recently this seems to have become completely taboo. This group, now commonly known as 'Rajputs', will also sometimes

describe themselves as 'Raviveds'. Mauritian Muslims may not admit to originating from India at all, connecting instead with a broader Islamic identification, whilst Christian Tamils who came as slaves or skilled free labourers in the eighteenth century today are a class apart from the descendants of nineteenth century Tamils. Only one community freely admits to mixed origins and welcomes intermarriage, the Creoles, and even here shared religion is a determining factor in most partnerships.

Because of their numerical preponderance, the Prime Minister has so far always been chosen from among the *vaisha* community. All 'communities' are represented in the cabinet, and lobbies continually ensure that ethnic interests are secured through 'their' Minister. Whatever their formal constituency, every major political party makes a point of inducting members of all communities, but the parties have to be led by *vaisha* if they are to stand any chance of electoral success. By one means or another, therefore, the majority community asserts its influence and control, even if formally the constitution attempts to effect a balance between their interests and those of other groups.

We know from Scott (1985) that social and political conflict need not present itself in organised, violent or insurrectionary forms, yet may still be significant. What seems to have happened in Mauritius since 1968 is that since a formal accord has been arrived at through the constitution to keep communal conflict at bay in the political sphere, it has simply been driven underground and into the small scale rivalries of day-to-day life.^{vi} Your preferred drink, the car you drive, even your superstitions are all ethnically determined in modern Mauritius. Competition between soft drink manufacturers is common the world over, but in Mauritius the Pepsi franchise is owned by the Muslim Gujarati Currimjee family, and as a result many Muslim retail outlets sell only Pepsi and at Muslim functions Pepsi is served. Biryani (a traditional Muslim dish), it is said, 'goes best with Pepsi', which thus has a unique place in the commensal rites of this community. The Coca-Cola franchise, by contrast, is owned by a Hindu family, is distributed in all Hindu retail outlets and is the preferred carbonated soft drink of this community. In their daily lives therefore Hindus and Muslims on the island know by their constitution that they belong to different fractions of society, and whilst prevented from doing so in Parliament, they act out a communal conflict in trivial aspects of their everyday existence.

Whilst seemingly trivial, such incidents confirm the profound and quotidian nature of communal differences on the island of Mauritius. An uneasy truce on the communal front has emerged and coalition government has prevailed, but this has only been with the backing of repressive Industrial Relations Legislation (limiting the power of the MMM), the 1970 Public Order Act and subsequent enactments, which prohibit the publication of seditious, communal and libellous articles (broadly defined) in magazines and newspapers. There is also considerable political influence over the activities of courts of law – inhibiting the prosecution of cases that might provoke communal tension. However, the current peace in Mauritius is arguably a mere simulacrum of the harmony spoken of in the tourist brochures, and it prevails most probably despite rather than because of (as some would maintain) its colonial constitutional and electoral system.

Migrant Origins and the Perception of Identity: Sri Lanka

The population of Sri Lanka, like that of any other country, was highly diverse. The origins of the island's inhabitants did not become an important issue, according to Nira Wickramasinghe (1995 and 2001), until British scholars began to speculate about it in the late nineteenth century and to devise hierarchical classifications of various groups according to the historical period in which they are supposed to have come. The Aryan theory of Indo-European origins was a particularly important challenge. In pre-colonial Sri Lanka the notion of Arya existed, but Aryan was a status obtainable through the performance of meritorious acts. British physical anthropologists by contrast believed it to be a racial category, enabling the differentiation of the South Asian population into discrete racial groups. A key moment in Sri Lanka was the translation of the Mahavamsa epic into Sinhalese in the early twentieth century by Wilhelm Geiger.^{vii} This assisted Sinhalese intellectuals who linked together colonial racial classifications with the tale of Vijaya's landing on the island in the 6th century B.C., thus providing the myth of a common, superior, Aryan origin for the Sinhalese people. This was far more appealing than depicting them as the descendants of the hordes of the demon-king Ravana (as depicted in the Ramayana), or any of the many other popular mythic theories of origin that abounded at the time.

The Vijayan myth captured people's imagination and became the kernel of Sinhalese nationalism. At the same time the identity of migrants was defined as everything 'un-Vijayan'

by Buddhist revivalists and Sinhalese nationalists who were attempting to build community consciousness in the early decades of the twentieth century. Under the strains of the great depression, this negative way of defining Sinhalese nationalism bore fateful fruit in violent encounters between unemployed Sinhalese and groups of migrant workers. Altogether these developments added considerable significance to attempts by the British to devise a constitution for Sri Lanka (or 'Ceylon' as it was then known), based upon their simplistic system of racial classification.

The very first scheme of democratic reform in Sri Lanka was announced in 1909. Demands for the abandonment of communal representation were rejected, and official representatives were in the majority, but just like in Mauritius there were elected representatives introduced for each of the 'communities', defined by the British as consisting of the Europeans, the 'Burghers', and 'Educated' Ceylonese (including Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslims). The Donoughmore Commission promised the next major reform in 1928.^{viii} Sri Lanka was a relatively prosperous, well educated and egalitarian society, however, and this presented a problem. According to British thinking, the franchise was not a right but a privilege, the granting of which must earn the loyalty of colonial subjects if it was to serve any purpose. Donoughmore therefore proposed a universal adult suffrage, but restricted it to those who could meet a test of residence for more than five years, and who affirmed a willingness to remain and permanently settle on the island. The issue of the various migratory origins of Sri Lanka's population thus suddenly became a crucial part of the definition of civic rights. Wickramasinghe (1995) argues that a sharp boundary was thereby created between the Sinhalese and more recent migratory inhabitants of the island – particularly the Tamil workers on the colonial tea plantations in the highlands. As if this were not enough, middle class Sinhalese nationalists demanded further restrictions including the retention of a specific literacy test (thereby excluding most Indian workers, as well as many Ceylonese). These were accepted, as well as a clause allowing the vote to anyone who met a property qualification, thus enfranchising every European and the richest Indians. The Donoughmore Constitution was thus a divisive affair, extending the suffrage on a simplistic basis of class and ethnicity. Unsurprisingly, anti-immigrant violence was a feature in the run up to the 1936 Council Elections and class and ethnicity - more than religion, the key feature in Indian constitutional arrangements in the 1930s - have remained the significant points of fracture in Sri Lankan public life ever since.

A perhaps significant legacy of British constitutional experiments was that anti-immigration legislation came to be regarded by many as the sensible and legitimate way to deal with strains on the economy. And thus Sri Lanka introduced stringent restrictions on immigration long before such measures were even thought of elsewhere. This process of exclusion became yet more virulent in the decades following independence, spawning the Tamil-Sinhalese civil war that has divided the island to this day.

The Evolution of Territorial Ethnicity: The Mohajirs in Pakistan

For a more pessimistic case one can look to the situation of the Hyderabadis and other ‘Mohajir’ migrants to Pakistan, post 1947. Here, the ethnography of Karen Leonard (2001), Oskar Verkaaik (2004), and Nichola Khan (2010) amongst others, reveals a persistent pattern of prejudice against Hyderabad migrants, so pervasive as to encourage many to attempt to deny altogether their migrant origins (as with many second and third generation migrants in the U.K.). Some Mohajirs interviewed by Karen Leonard in her research spoke with great pride of their migrant identity, pointing out their elective choice to live in Pakistan, rather than the fact that they were merely born there. Others however, and especially the migrants from Hyderabad, were uncomfortable with the label, preferring to preserve their identity as Hyderabadis, or to integrate themselves as Pakistanis – an attempt which is not always welcomed. Integration has been made more difficult by the Pakistani government’s practice of enumerating them in the census as a separate ethnic group, a practice which has encouraged Mohajirs to regard themselves in this light (echoes here of the practice of the colonial regime in India).

Hyderabadis were often highly educated and as migrants, like other Mohajirs, tended to be economically successful. This has fuelled a great deal of prejudice against them, and against which they have reacted. Despite this, the Hyderabadis have remained relatively apolitical and have kept their distance from the *Mohajir/Muttahida Qaumi Movement* (MQM), preferring, apparently, anonymity rather than association with an organisation increasingly notorious for its militancy and violence.^{ix} More seriously, they reason that representing Mohajirs as an ethnic group demanding a territorial base cannot but end in disappointment and defeat.

Instead, many are opting out and attempting to escape the Mohajir identity. This they can achieve through marriage, or by adopting a regional or metropolitan culture already extant.

Politically, the attempts by Mohajirs to make a place for themselves within the new state of Pakistan all started to come apart after 1970 when the rise of regionalism split the western and eastern halves of Pakistan apart. In the words of Mohammad Waseem, 'territorial nationalism pushed aside ideological nationalism as the dominant mode of thinking' (2001) and in West Pakistan, the Indus valley and Punjabi origins of Pakistani civilization were increasingly emphasised, at the expense of Indo-Muslim civilization, thereby marginalising the Mohajirs. Simultaneously, the accession to power of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) in Western Pakistan, committed to the goal of preserving Sindhi culture against the perceived onslaught of Mohajirs, in the words of Mohammad Waseem, 'spelt doom for the cherished world view of the migrant elite rooted in a unitarian model of politics'.^x

In response to the popular four cultures identification of Pakistan – Sindhi, Punjabi, Baluch and Pakhtun – Mohajirs then felt entitled to create their own sub-nationalism, centred in Karachi and Sindh. Interestingly although they inevitably became rivals, this rivalry did not preclude the possibility of co-operation between the MQM and PPP against the even greater threat from upcountry Baluch and Pakhtun migrants in Karachi, against whom they formed an electoral alliance in 1988. This alliance was however a short-lived phenomenon and relationships between the MQM and PPP in Sindh have been marked ever since by violence, terrorism and periodical interventions by the military in an attempt to restore order. An evident fact, however, is that at any point Mohajir-Sindhi rivalry might well have been averted. The whole issue arose not as a result of the activities of the state, but due to its inactivities, and its failure on several counts to secure the legal rights of individuals and property. Ethnicity therefore only emerged as an alternative basis on which to defend these interests once the Pakistani state had proven itself insufficient to the task.

Migrants and their 'Others' in the U.S.A.

Our final example, based upon the research of Aminah Mohammed (2000, 2001], describes a situation far removed from the classical circumstance of Hindu-Muslim rivalry within the Indian sub-continent. Or so it might seem at first glance. After all, is not the U.S.A. one of the

most modern of societies, certainly the most prosperous, and by its constitution, theoretically egalitarian and liberal? The reality of course is that the U.S. is not in every instance a melting pot that subsumes identities, but a nation that imposes an additional abstract loyalty to the flag and Constitution.

Migrants from South Asia first began to arrive in the U.S.A. in considerable numbers in the 1960s following a liberalisation of immigration policies. Today there are more than a million, and since immigration policy has been biased towards the educated and qualified, they have been among the more successful of America's citizens. Although the United States is officially a secular country, its interpretation of secularism, whilst separating State and religion, enjoins that equal respect be given to all religions (this is not far removed from the Indian idea of *sarva dharma saramabhava*).^{xi} Both Muslims and Hindus in the U.S.A. are therefore given considerable freedom, even encouragement, in the exercise of their beliefs. Because of this, and because South Asians in the U.S. are very scattered, one might imagine that, in this land of immigration, the relatively prosperous communities of Indians, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis might have found a way of living with each other, a *modus vivendi*, far removed from the conflicts and tensions of the subcontinent. This is, however, far from being the case.

In her research, Aminah Mohammed has pointed out a wide range of prejudices and a labyrinthine growth of associations. There are conflicts particularly over the issue of language. Urdu and Hindi are used as markers of difference, particularly among Muslims (for whom it can be a symbol of their religious devotion), and many South Asians will insist on speaking to other South Asians in Urdu or Hindi, regardless of where they come from. Most Hindus are in fact from Gujarat or Punjab. A rift has thus developed between the Hindi/Urdu speaking North Indians and the South Indians, who never meet together in the same associations. Amongst north Indians, the Hindus and Muslims also meet in separate associations, whilst amongst Muslims, Hyderabadis and those from a Mohajir background are to be found, as in modern Pakistan, keeping apart from one another and meeting in separate elite organisations. Mohammed highlights particularly the role of community leaders, and holds them responsible for much of the animosity. Arguably though, these rifts might still fit within classical instrumentalist theories of communalism. To begin with, one could point out that prosperity is not the same thing as economic security. The U.S. is a highly mobile and competitive society where expectations are high. Economic opportunities fluctuate, albeit at a generally much higher level than in other societies, and these South Asian communities will inevitably at times find themselves as economic rivals. An interesting point about these

divisions is that they are not primarily, it seems, religious. Any number of geographical or linguistic bases might be found for the creation of a new association, but Hinduism and Islam do not have a monolithic function, overdetermining this process. Thus Indians will even shun Hindus from the Caribbean, questioning their 'Indianness', whilst Hindus from African origins will be accepted as equals.

Amidst the *mêlée* of competing associations amongst South Asians in the USA, the prospects for co-operation may seem limited. However there are optimists (Aminah Mohammed amongst them) who insist that some sort of South Asian pan-ethnicity will eventually emerge, comparable to that seen among Afro-Americans and Chinese Americans. Evidence for is to be seen already in annual events such as the Indian Day parades on August 15th, which are commonly attended by South Asians from every background. Through mobilisation and organisation the South Asian gay and lesbian movement in North America has also been particularly effective in overcoming received boundaries of all sorts (Roy 2008). The prospects for a South Asian pan-ethnicity seem to be strongest amongst the second and third generation offspring from migrant families, who culturally have more in common, not least of all the American language. Within the U.K., where South Asian communities have been established for rather longer, this development has already begun to take place. The principal obstacle is the lack of an appropriate vocabulary (the term 'South Asian' itself being unrecognised both by the migrant and host societies), but the English language (Dave 2005), film and popular music have all provided a means of communication that may reinforce but can also transcend communal boundaries. In particular one can point to the contributions of musicians such as the late Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, who achieved a following throughout South Asia and particularly among Asian communities abroad. The musical phenomenon of *neo-bhangra* has also become a musical means of expressing South Asian identity, albeit in a male-dominated form, that is truly 'post-colonial', borrowing from every culture, and transcending ethno-religious boundaries.^{xii} There is also of course the Bollywood movie industry, the stars of which enjoy a following in all parts of Asia and amongst every South Asian community abroad (Desai 2005, Kaur and Sinha 2005). Pakistani 'sufi rock' bands such as *Junoon* and pop classical bands such as *Fuzon*, have crossed the border in the opposite direction, winning a substantial following amongst Indian youth. Most recently the *Coke Studio* recordings, produced by Rohail Hyatt and broadcast on the internet as well as on Pakistani television, have combined international professional studio musicians with folk artists recruited from across the subcontinent, bringing together generations, nations, and diverse musical traditions. In such ways, as James Clifford (1997) and Homi Bhabha (1990)

have argued, old and new diasporas can offer the resources for emergent postcolonial identities.

Conclusion: A South Asian Pan-Identity

One could conclude from a historical point-of-view that a South Asian pan-identity does not need to be discovered, so much as *re*-discovered. There are those who would maintain that such an identity was present in pre-modern times (Jalal & Bose 1998), and from the late nineteenth century there is evidence of high levels of mobility, and of the internationalisation of many South Asian migrants, from both working and middle class origins (Bates 1993, 2000, Markovits 2000). Arguably, pre-modern society was always more fluid: it was the colonial period itself which saw a rigidification of custom and occupational specialisation, and of concomitant identities (Bates 1996, Washbrook 1996; Dirks 2001). Migration overseas was a means of escaping the increasingly inflexible and under-employed Indian labour market, and amongst those migrant workers, many had become highly cosmopolitan by the end of the colonial period, with Indians abroad commonly raising their status, economically and socially, and being 're-born' into a world free of caste, if not all forms of discrimination. In the process, new identities have been constructed to enable them to bridge the gap between the old and the new worlds and to maintain their links with both. Sadly, the legacy of conflict immediately before, during and after the de-colonisation process has commonly marred the relationship between South Asian communities, and between themselves and indigenous populations. The growth of postcolonial national identities has also commonly involved a process of definition by exclusion that has impacted negatively upon migrant groups—Sri Lanka and East Africa being here the most conspicuous examples. However, identities cannot exist in a vacuum as a product of will, nor are they solely created from elements drawn from identities of the past. The evolution of laws, constitutions and political assemblies, and the segregation of communities are a vital part in the history of identity formation. The imperial legacy in all these areas has often been profound, and imperial institutions enshrining caste, class, race and religion as the boundaries of South Asian communities have had important and long-term effects.

Notes

ⁱ The Vishwa Hindu Parishad is an international organisation and a key constituent of the so-called 'Sangh Parivar' or brotherhood of Hindu nationalist organisations in India. Founded in 1964 its aim is to protect and promote Hindu society. It recent years it has campaigned controversially for the construction of a Hindu temple on the site of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya in north India and for the removal of Masjids from sites considered of importance to Hindus elsewhere in India. Jamaat-e-Islami is a religious and social party, the oldest in Pakistan, founded in 1941 in Lahore by the Muslim theologian Maulana Sayyid Abul Ala Maududi. A sister organisation was established in Bangladesh after 1971 and the Jamaat has close ties with international groups such as the Muslim brotherhood. Within Pakistan, the Jamaat leads the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal alliance of religious parties. The Jamaat opposes westernisation and its objectives are the 'Iqamat-e-Deen' or 'Nizam-e-Mustafa' - the establishment of a pure Islamic state, governed by Sharia law.

ⁱⁱ It is noticeable that this practice of community-formation 'from above' is followed in the UK to this day: whilst police authorities in Britain are enjoined to consult with local 'community leaders' representative of Black, Asian, Muslim, Afro-Caribbean, and occasionally Gay and Lesbian 'communities', these leaders are not adopted through any constitutional or elective process but at the whim of officials. By contrast it is never felt necessary to single out and consult 'white' community leaders in this fashion since they form an almost absolute majority of elected members in local and national government. Not a single Muslim M.P., for example, had been elected to the U.K. Parliament until 1997 when Mohammed Salwar was elected to the constituency of Glasgow Govan—upon which he was immediately accused of electoral malpractice.

ⁱⁱⁱ See also Kelly, 1991 and 1992.

^{iv} On the fiftieth anniversary of the arrival of the first Indians, two different organisations called the Fiji Indian National Congress were formed in Fiji: one intending to celebrate the occasion, the other proposing that it should be marked by a day of mourning. The two Congresses agreed to amalgamate on 7 November 1929. The Congress aimed to unite and represent all Fijians of Indian origin. Unfortunately this goal was not achieved as disagreement over the distribution of relief funds following floods in 1930 caused the non-Hindu members to leave.

^v This discussion is partly based upon the author's own first-hand observations in Mauritius in 1996-97 and again in 2004-05 for which acknowledgment is due to support from travel grants awarded by the University of Edinburgh's Hayter Fund and the Carnegie Trust for the Universities of Scotland.

^{vi} In order to avert communal conflict, the 1968 constitution of Mauritius established what is known as the 'best loser' system. According to this system, 62 of the up to 70 members of the National Assembly are elected by universal adult suffrage in a secret ballot from multi-member constituencies by a plurality. The country is thus divided into 21 Constituencies, each of which returns three members to the Assembly (except for the island of Rodrigues which returns two). Each voter has three votes and all three votes must be marked on the ballot sheet for the elector's choice to be valid. Up to 8 seats are then allocated by the Electoral Supervisory Commission according to a complex formula to 'best losers' to ensure 'a fair and adequate representation of each community'.

^{vii} *The Mahavamsa or The Great Chronicle of Ceylon*, was translated into English by Wilhelm Geiger (Professor of Indogermanic Philology at Erlangen University) under the patronage of the Government of Ceylon and published in London by the Pali Text Society in 1912.

^{viii} The Donoughmore Commission was responsible for the creation of the Donoughmore Constitution which allowed Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) a substantial measure of self-government in the years between 1931 and 1947. The Donoughmore Constitution instituted a system of universal franchise, which enfranchised lower castes and women over the age of 21 as well as adult males, and a system of governance by executive committees in which every ethnic community was represented. These communities were conceived at the time as consisting of Kandhyans, Sinhalese, Ceylon Tamils, Indian (Plantation) Tamils, and Europeans.

^{ix} The Mohajir Qaumi Movement (MQM) changed its name to Muttahida ('United') Qaumi Movement in 1997 in an effort to broaden its constituency and has indeed acquired a following in the northern areas of Pakistan. Since its foundation in 1978 it has remained, nonetheless, predominantly an organisation representing the interests of Mohajirs from its powerbase in Sindh, where it is the second largest party after the PPP (Pakistan People's Party) and the third largest in Pakistan. Despite its progressive stance on many issues the MGM was accused of involvement in violent militant activities and was amongst the targets of the Pakistan army's clean up campaign from 1992-1999. Since 1992 the MQM's founder, Altaf Hussain, has lived in exile in London.

^x The Pakistan People's Party was founded in 1967 by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and in 2010 is Pakistan's largest political party. Following the assassination of Z.A. Bhutto's daughter Benazir Bhutto in 2007, her nineteen-year old son, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and his father Asif Ali Zardari (currently President) were appointed co-chairmen of the party. It is a centre left party whose strongest support comes from landholding families and electorate of the southern province of Sindh, although it also has a following within the urban areas of Punjab, Baluchistan and the Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa (formerly NWFP).

^{xi} The Hindu concept of *Sarva Dharma Sambhava* is not equivalent to secularism. It literally means that all Dharmas (truths) are equal to or harmonious with each other. As such, its supporters, within the context of the Indian constitution, do not deny that religion might have a role in public life but merely insist that one religion should not take precedence over another.

^{xii} Neo-bhangra is traditional Punjabi bhangra dance music mixed with reggae or rap. Originating within the (notably UK) diaspora, it has a strong youth following. It continues to adapt and change, and is now popular across several generations.

Additional Items for Bibliography:

Khan, Nichola (2010), *Mohajir Militancy in Pakistan* (London: Routledge, 2010)

Verkaaik, Oskar (2004), *Migrants and Militants: "Fun" and Urban Violence in Pakistan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press).